

If You See a Stranded or Dead Whale:

1. KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

- Touching dead whales can lead to infection
- Approaching live whales causes them stress
- Local mudflats can be lethal

2. IMMEDIATELY CALL:

- NOAA Fisheries 24 hour stranding hotline
(877) 925-7773
- Alaska SeaLife Center stranding hotline
(888) 774-7325
- Provide where and when you saw the whales, and contact information. Pictures are also very helpful!

Help Protect Cook Inlet Beluga Whales

REWARD UP TO \$2500

For information leading to the conviction of person(s) who violate the Marine Mammal Protection Act or the Endangered Species Act.

Help the Cook Inlet beluga population recover by preventing unlawful harassment, chasing, hunting, capturing or killing of belugas. This will ensure their presence in Cook Inlet for future generations.

IT IS ILLEGAL TO:

- Hunt/harass Cook Inlet beluga whales
- Collect parts from dead Cook Inlet beluga whales

See
suspicious
activities? Call:
**NOAA Fisheries
Enforcement Hotline
(800) 853-1964**

Callers can remain
anonymous

We need and appreciate your help!

Conservation

The Endangered Species Act requires the preparation and implementation of a recovery plan for each listed species. NOAA Fisheries' Cook Inlet Beluga Recovery Plan, completed in December 2016, is available at <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/pr/cib-recovery-plan>.

The Recovery Plan focuses on research, management, monitoring, and outreach efforts in a comprehensive approach to Cook Inlet beluga whale recovery. It identifies and assesses threats to Cook Inlet beluga whales, outlines actions that can be taken to help achieve recovery of the population, and defines criteria that can be used to assess recovery.

Contact NOAA Fisheries

**24 Hour
Stranding Hotline
(877) 925-7773**

**Report Suspicious
Activities
(800) 853-1964**



The National Marine Fisheries Service
(NOAA Fisheries) is an agency within the
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
of the U.S. Department of Commerce

*The mission of NOAA Fisheries is to provide
stewardship of the nation's living marine resources
through science-based conservation and management
and promotion of healthy ecosystems*

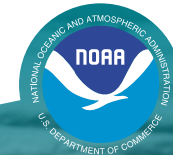
NOAA FISHERIES

Alaska Regional Office
Protected Resources Division
222 W 7th Ave, Box 43
Anchorage, AK 99513
Phone: 907-271-5006
Fax: 907-271-3030

Alaska Fisheries Science Center
Marine Mammal Laboratory
7600 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, WA 98115
Phone: 206-526-4032
Fax: 206-526-6615

*For more information about Cook Inlet beluga whales
visit alaskafisheries.noaa.gov
afsc.noaa.gov*

Cook Inlet Beluga Whales



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

Photo by: Christopher Garner, Department of Defense
LOC 481-1795-01 MMPA-ESA Research Permit 14210 Photo by: Tamara McGuire, LGL Alaska Research Associates

SPECIES IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

Cook Inlet Beluga Whales

Protecting and recovering marine species is a core mission for NOAA Fisheries. As part of a “Species in the Spotlight” initiative, NOAA Fisheries has developed a 5-year action plan for Alaska’s Cook Inlet beluga whales. The Species in the Spotlight initiative focuses resources on eight of the most at-risk species managed by NOAA Fisheries, and aims to stabilize population declines in these species.

The 5-year action plan for Cook Inlet beluga whales includes planned and proposed research and actions to promote recovery of the species. NOAA Fisheries invites partners and potential partners to join in this effort.

NOAA Fisheries listed Cook Inlet beluga whales as endangered under the Endangered Species Act in 2008 and designated critical habitat for the species in 2011. The 2016 abundance estimate for the Cook Inlet beluga population is 328 animals.

The beluga whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*) is a small toothed whale, also known as the “white whale” because of the white coloration of adults. Calves are born dark to brownish gray from June to October and remain with their mothers for several years, becoming lighter in color as they grow older and eventually turning white.

Adults average 12-14 feet in length, and weigh about 3,000 pounds. Belugas may live 60 or more years.

Abundance



Management Status

In response to the nearly 50% decline in abundance from 1994 to 1998, NOAA Fisheries declared the Cook Inlet beluga whale stock as depleted under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. After a continued annual decline of 1.45% from 1999 to 2008, the Cook Inlet beluga whale Distinct Population Segment was listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act in 2008. The Cook Inlet beluga whale Distinct Population Segment continued to decline at an annual rate of 0.5% from 2006 to 2016, and in 2016 was estimated to be 328 whales.

Diet

Cook Inlet beluga whales prey on a wide variety of fish and invertebrate species, focusing on eulachon (hooligan or candlefish) and Pacific salmon when they are seasonally abundant in the spring and summer. Little information exists on beluga whale prey species during the winter.

Potential Threats

The following potential threats are outlined in the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale Recovery Plan:

HIGH CONCERN

- Catastrophic events (e.g. natural disasters, spills, mass strandings)
- Cumulative effects of multiple stressors
- Noise

MEDIUM CONCERN

- Disease agents (e.g. pathogens, parasites, and harmful algal blooms)
- Habitat loss or degradation
- Reduction in prey
- Unauthorized take

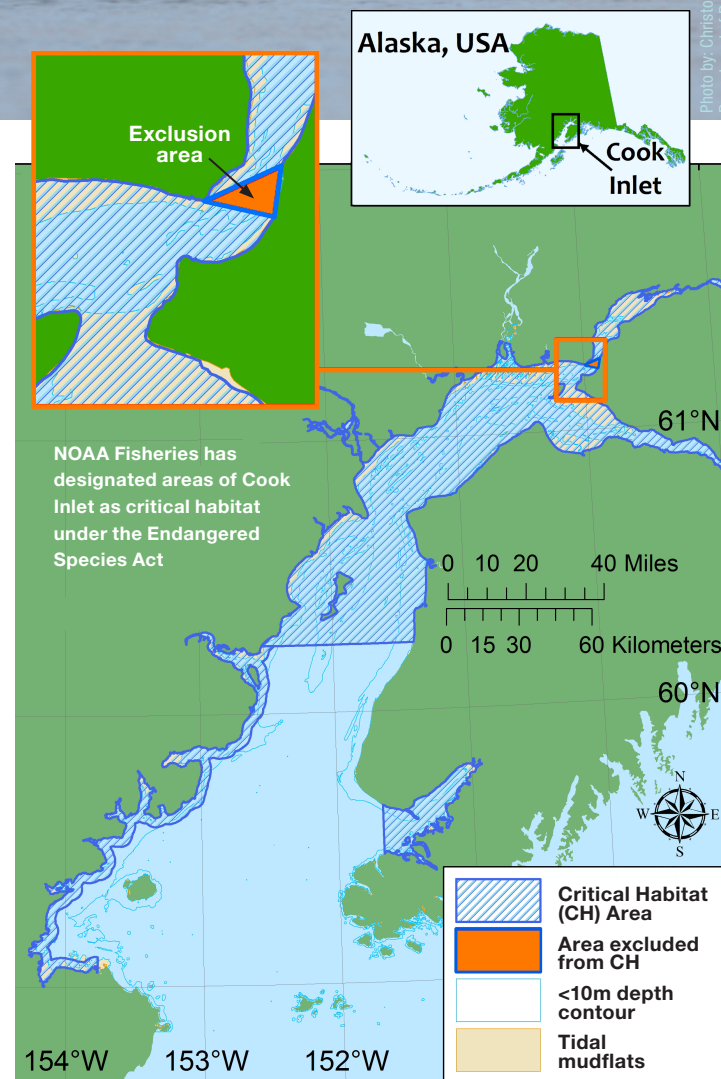
LOW CONCERN

- Pollution
- Subsistence hunting
- Predation

Distribution and Habitat

Cook Inlet beluga whales reside in Cook Inlet year-round, gathering in the upper inlet in summer and fall, and dispersing to deeper water during winter and spring.

Shallow tidal flats near the river mouths of upper Cook Inlet provide features favorable for beluga whales when feeding, breeding, and nursing.



Learn more at alaskafisheries.noaa.gov and afsc.noaa.gov